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The season of the latter rains is with us. About ten days ago they descended in almost unimaginable fury. The air turned frigid, and the winds assumed the proportions of a gale. For more than four days the rains continued, sometimes in torrential downpour and sometimes more gently. But the bitter winds never ceased; the refugees at Bethlehem were swept from their frail shelters, and the authorities were at their wit's end to secure them shelter in schools, mosques, and other public buildings. Jerusalem can be very cold as all of you know who have been here in the winter season. Even with the heat turned on for a few hours a day the School was cold, and we huddled about our recently purchased oil stoves, grateful to Mrs. Kraeling and Mr. Louis Rabinowitz who had made adequate provision against such eventualities. After the winds had spent their energies and the skies seemed exhausted, the sun appeared, and since then we have had the comfort of the out-of-doors to counteract the colder temperatures within. We from the West were thankful for the change, but the pious Muslims rejoiced that Allah had satisfied the thirsty land.

Last Thursday we celebrated Thanksgiving. There were some eighteen of us who gathered about the School table. Among our guests was Mr. Joseph Sa'ad, Secretary of the Palestine Museum. The ladies, including Mrs. Oleg Grabar, the wife of our Fellow, Mrs. James Ross, Mrs. Boone Bowen, and Mrs. Cross, saw to it that the table was liberally festooned with a cornucopia of the season's fruits and vegetables, really a sight to kindle the admiration of anyone. Omar Jibrin, the School's indispensable chef, outdid himself in preparing an excellent dinner. We retired afterwards to the Director's house for an evening of characteristically animated discussion. Such events may seem rather irrelevant to the work of our institution, but in reality they serve to put our work in a context of social congeniality, which we consider important. It is surprising how much actually gets done on some of these occasions. We are most of us inveterate lovers of 'shop', and we use every occasion to transmit the day's academic news, to exchange opinions, and to challenge each other's pet theories and points of view.

Our life here at the School is constantly refreshed by callers, visitors, and guests. Professor Albright paid us an all too brief visit, but all of us were delighted at the opportunity of seeing him again, of hearing his report on his recent activities, and of receiving his comment on the work of members of the School. We all wished that he might have remained longer. Then Professor K.A.C. Crosswell, formerly professor of Fu'ad University (now University of Cairo) and author of the monumental volume on Early Muslim Architecture came in for tea one afternoon, and he and Mr. Grabar gave us some first-rate insights into the artistic achievements of the Umayyads. At present E. Hammershaimb, Professor of Semitics at the University of Aarhus, is with us and is joining us in our field trips and contributing in many ways to our common life. Last week Miss Dorothy Garrod, whose excavations in Kurdistan and Wadi Mughara will be remembered by many of you, arrived at the School to spend a period of several months of intensive study of pre-historic remains. Her field of interest is not represented by any of our personnel. She has therefore guided us along untravelled ways and has entered into our various activities as a regular member.

And now to the record of archaeological study and research. You will recall from our last news-letter that we had something to say about the ten-day archaeological tour through Syria and Lebanon and the account of our visits to Roman, Umayyad, Crusader, and other sites. But the three places of greatest interest to our group were Tell Hariri (Mari), Ras esh-Shamra (Ugarit), and Jebel (Byblos). André Parrot and Georges Dossin and other members of the Tell Hariri party were at the Hotel Palmyra in Damascus while we were there. Parrot was so busy with conferences that we were unable to see him, but I had several good conversations with Dossin, who urged us to alter our itinerary in order that we might be at Mari when he and Parrot were there. But that would have meant a delay of almost a week so we went 'on our own', in many ways a grievous disadvantage. But we did have the opportunity to receive a general view of the excavations, especially of Zimri Lim's famous palace. We could follow quite easily many of the things reported in Parrot's accounts, such as the drainage system, the bath facilities, the treasury, etc. But despite all our efforts we found no trace of the massiv rouge, which Parrot believes to be a ziggurat.

Ras esh-Shamra was in many ways a perfect contrast to Tell Hariri. Professor and Mrs. Claude Schaeffer were there to greet us and extended us every conceivable courtesy. As we approached the site we got a glorious view of Mount Casius. The whole mountain was bathed in sunlight except at its crest where large fleecy clouds gathered as if to shelter the home of the gods. Gradually they grew darker, and Baal Hadad made his appearance. The thunder rolled, the lightning flashed, and the rains began to descend. The workmen on the dig fled to the shelters, but Professor Schaeffer insisted on showing us what there was to be seen. We explored the areas which had only recently been unearthed, notably the myriad rooms of the large palace. Only a portion of the vast complex (almost 75 rooms) has been uncovered, but the palace certainly extends much farther to the south and thus promises to rival even Zimri Lim's celebrated edifice.

Already discoveries have been made which will considerably alter some of the views now regnant among specialists in the field. For example, we have usually associated Ugarit with its cultic rituals etc. and have sometimes contrasted it in this respect with the historical revelations of the Tell el-Amarna correspondence. But the more recent discoveries of from inscriptions move in the direction of Near Eastern history at least as far as the twelfth century B.C. There is also a series of tablets found in an east-west oriented court apparently near the center of the palace which one may safely predict will prove of the first importance for the historical and cultural life of the period in the second half of the first millennium B.C. Professor Schaeffer permitted us to examine one of the most substantial of the inscriptions, ca. 4"2", as superbly incised as though it had come only yesterday from the hand of the ancient scribe. In the center of it was a large circular royal seal deeply set and impressed into the clay. If these references sound rather cryptic, it is because exact reports must await the releases of the excavators. These may be expected early in the spring, however. I must not complete this all too brief account of the visit at Ras esh-Shamra without expressing again our appreciation to Professor and Mrs. Schaeffer. We came from our tour of the site drenched to the skin, but when we arrived at the house Mrs. Schaeffer supplied sweaters, coats, macintoshes, etc. A warm fire, hot tea and delicious cakes, and hospitality in the true Oriental manner restored us to high spirits. But the rain continued with such vehemence that Schaeffer feared we would be stranded if we did not leave at once. He himself accompanied us in his jeep to the main highway, and his assistant, M. Forrer, the son of the famous Hittite scholar, took us all the way to Latakia, where we exchanged the miscellany of garb for our own.

On our way to Jebel (Byblos) we stopped briefly at Nahr Kelt to view the famous cliff inscriptions and then proceeded to our destination. Unhappily M. Durand was not there to interpret the site for us, but the caretaker proved of some help and with our inspection of past reports, we were able to profit enormously by what we saw.

This ancient city, excavated first by M. Montet in 1921 and continued by M. Dunand in 1926, impressed us all profoundly. We began our examination of the site with the series of great Bronze Age fortifications and then proceeded to the royal cemetery to visit the rock-hewn shaft tombs discovered by Montet, including, of course, the famous Tomb V where the Ahiham sarcophagus was found (we are just reading it in our class on north-Semitic epigraphy). Later at the museum in Beirut we saw the sarcophagus itself, and Professor Cross went through the inscription and called the attention of the interested members of our group to its special features. We had more than a glimpse of the miniature Roman theatre, the Bronze Age complex of temples unearthed by Montet and Dunand, and other items of major interest, but concentrated mostly on the excavations currently in progress under the direction of M. Dunand. We observed a series of super-imposed plaster floors, very similar to those of Neolithic Jericho, and later, what we interpreted to be chalcolithic jar-burials sunk into the neolithic levels.

I fear this all too brief account will have to suffice for our first major trek of the year. Our second major assault on famous Near Eastern sites was directed toward Petra. Professor Cross had gone there earlier in the fall, so remained in Jerusalem with his scrolls, but the station wagon was, as usual, filled to capacity with members of the School. Mr. Awni Dajani, inspector for the Department of Antiquities in the Palestine Museum, accompanied us as guest of the Director. On our way we spent an hour or more at Dhiban, but here again we were at the disadvantage of not having a man like Dr. Tushingham with us to interpret what appeared to us all a complicated and difficult site. Before we left, however, we succeeded in identifying several walls. We gathered several pieces of Nabataean pottery. Mr. Dajani, the cousin of the inspector, and mustasarrif for the region about Ma'an, had paved the way for our trip by notifying all police posts in his own area and outside of it of our arrival. The result was that we received a cordial reception wherever we went. We stayed for two nights at Elji, the village nearest Wadi Musa and Petra. The first evening we were all invited to tea at the home of the director of police and the second we were entertained to a mansef, a meal of roast sheep and huge quantities of rice bathed in gravy. The local officials, the doctor, and several school teachers joined our party. The details of these occasions are so familiar to many of you that I shall not undertake to recount them.

We rose early the morning after our arrival at Elji, eager to get our first glimpse of the red mountains. The sun had not yet risen, so we had a chance to view them lying there, inert, massive and cold in deep red silence. A half hour later the sun appeared, and nature began to work her immemorial magic of transformation. The play of light and shadow, so notable and breath-taking a phenomenon of all this region, rehearsed its ancient mystery before our eyes. By eight o'clock we were all in the saddle ready for the day's encounter. Slowly we filed through the narrow gorges, and at each turn of the way new wonders greeted our alien eyes. It was a day we shall never forget. If it will not sound excessive, I may record my own impression. Petra is to the world of antiquity what the Grand Canyon is to nature. We haunted the usual spots; the pyramid tomb with the seven (I could see only six) little pyramids at its top, the Khazneh, the royal Palaces, the superbly preserved high place, the amphitheatre, and literally scores of elaborate tombs. We collected hundreds of the beautiful Nabataean sherds, several pieces of a magnificent lamp with elaborate imagery (winged horse, goddess etc.), and several tissue-thin jars of superb workmanship. It seems beyond belief that after all these years there is still so much to collect on the site; it was natural that we were all suspicious of possible fakes, but even at that we succeeded in adding to our several little museums of antiquities. On our return we stopped for some time at Khirbet Tannur and were reminded again, as we were throughout our "explorations in Eastern Palestine" of Professor Nelson Glueck's epoch-making contributions to this area of the world. He proved to be an ever-present guide as we passed through the old area

of Moab and Edom with its scores of tells. Although much of the material from Khirbet Tannur is in Amman and in Cincinnati, there was still more than enough to kindle our interest. We did find some Nabataean pottery but not as much as we had hoped! The temple was, of course, the major object of interest and we spent much of our time studying its construction, its artistic remains (of which there is still a good deal to be seen), and its general configuration. We had a good deal of tire trouble near Kerak, but through Imron's ingenuity we were able to get the station wagon moving again. So we proceeded to Madaba for a view of the famous mosaic (see especially now Father O'Callaghan's excellent treatment in the Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible, pp. 627-704, with superb illustrations and an excellent picture of the map itself), Mount Nebo with its collection of antiquities in the little museum, and Khirbet Meshetta.

There have been several minor trips also. One day recently we loaded the Pontiac and Chevrolet stations wagons with the complete contingent of the School's personnel, students, wives, annual professor and director. Our goal was Jerash but there were other sites we wanted to inspect on the way. We took the old Roman road to Jericho where we drove along the Wadi Kelt and later got a general view of Tulul 'abu 'al 'Alsiq which we expect to visit later in the year. We drove to Khirbet Fasayil (ancient Phasaelus), but there was little for us to see; excavations may reveal much more, however. Then we turned in the direction of Damiye and the dolmen fields. We climbed the hill where the dolmens are to be seen in considerable number, examined a number of them, took many pictures, and prepared to return to the cars. Mr. Jeeninga and I were the last to come down, and just as we were leaping from one large rock to another, beneath our feet a hyena rushed out, much to the astonishment and excitement of the whole group. We were thankful that it was ten o'clock in the morning and not at night when the beast might have proved to be less in a hurry.

For the students this was the first visit to Jerash, so we surveyed the major area of the great site with its baths, theatres, temples, churches, via principalis, gates, forums, mosaics, and many other monuments. Jerash has a remarkable effect upon almost everyone who visits it; it excites admiration and wonder and enthusiasm beyond Baalbek and Palmyra, and almost any other ancient Roman site (with the exception of Petra, which was for a long period under Roman domination). Jerash is so vast in extent, so many-faceted in its life and culture, so majestic in its architecture (e.g. the temple of Zeus, the temple of Artemis), so surprising in its great variety that nothing quite seems to match it. Diana Kirkbride displayed to us her work of restoration of the theatre near the South Gate of the city.

Yesterday (Nov. 28) was clear and cold, but we rose at 5.30 for another excursion, this time to Seilun (Shiloh), Balata (Shechem), Sebastiyeh (Samartha), and Tell Ta'anek (Taanach). There were but six in our party besides Imron, our driver. By eight we had reached Shiloh. The excavations carried on by Hans Kjaer and Aage Schmidt were still very much in evidence, but they were never carried to any degree of completion. It is possible that the Danes may undertake the project in the near future. While the excavations at Shechem have long been confused due to endless controversy among the field archaeologists involved, the site is certainly worth seeing. Two large gates, inner and outer, were studied and the masonry of the walls observed. As usual, we gathered a number of sherds. Samartha was, of course, the most thrilling of the sites. The view is magnificent. While the palace of Jeroboam II seems to have been covered over, we did see an excellently preserved Hebrew wall. The Roman remains are, of course, the most extensive and spectacular. When we reached Tell Ta'anek we learned to our sorrow that the region had been declared a military zone; despite our repeated efforts with the authorities, we were not allowed to climb the tell. So we decided to take a look at Dr. Free's excavation of Dothan. We found to our delight abundant ceramic remains, especially in the walls. Since the excavation was so recent, we were able to get a good idea of the work that had been done so far.

Archaeological news of one kind or another is constantly coming to us from various sources. Some weeks ago fifteen ossuaries dating from the Roman period were found at Silwan. All of them are nicely designed in Greek patterns. Four of them have Hebrew characters, one of them marked with the Hebrew aleph, another with a name which may be Eleazar. These will be reported upon in the Revue Biblique by Père Benoit. While the ground was being cleared and leveled near the St. George's playground a number of tombs from the Herodian period were uncovered. A coin from the Herodian period, the base of a Roman lamp, were unearthed. The columns and capitals laid bare were Byzantine. Numerous glass tesserae from a mosaic were also found. At Tell Karim in the Nablous district a Byzantine tomb was discovered and cleared by the Department of Antiquities. Awni Dajani of the Department also reports the discovery of four new tombs at Tell el-Sultan, but they will not be cleared until the arrival of Miss Kenyon later in the season.

Despite the foregoing description of field trips and recent archaeological news hereabouts, the most important and significant work of the ASOR this year is directed to the scroll fragments. Professor Cross has been spending much of his time in the museum since his arrival in June. He is charged chiefly with the biblical materials while Père Milik and John Allegro, a student of H.H.Rowley and G.R.Driver at Oxford, are concentrating on the non-biblical materials. It is becoming more clear each succeeding week that these inscriptional materials are of epoch-making importance. We are learning a great deal of the life of the Essenes, but beyond that we are coming to see more and more clearly the bearing of the literary materials upon the New Testament and other early Christian writings. The inter-testamental period is bound to experience a great revival in the next few years; views that have been widely and commonly held will have to undergo radical revision. The Director has been assigned a number of scroll fragments, some from Isaiah and some from Ecclesiastes. One of the features that is most noteworthy both of the Murabba'at fragments and of at least some of the biblical materials is their almost word for word, even letter by letter, identity with the masoretic text. To be sure, Prof. Cross has found fragments, very early ones, which are closely related to the Egyptian recension of the Septuagint. We hope to report in greater detail in our next letter on these and related matters.

James Muilenburg, Director.